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United for Quality Care

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SEIU 1199NE  
Yvonne Foster  
Bloomfield

Before the Appropriations Committee

Good Afternoon Senator Lesser, Representative Gilcrest, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Yvonne Foster, I live in Bloomfield, and have worked as a Certified Nurse's Assistant (CNA) at Windsor Health and Rehab for 22 years. I come before you today to testify in support of improving funding for nursing homes in Connecticut.

Working with the elderly is a field that was very easy for me to adapt to, as in my culture this is our way of giving back to our elderly. I love the work I do because I love caring for my residents. With that said, underfunding has driven many people away from this field. With the wages I earn, I have to work 70-80 hours a week just to get by. I have been at Windsor Health & Rehab for 22 years and am making less than \$20 an hour. I have co-workers who have been there for 40 years and do not make \$20.00 an hour, who will soon be retiring with their last paycheck. We know there is a high demand for this work, yet we pay the people doing this work poverty wages. This worries me. I am tired of seeing my co-workers leave to go work in other facilities or leave the industry altogether to go work in other fields

Short staffing is another reason caregivers are leaving this field. Chronic staffing issues at Windsor Health & Rehab leave many day shifts with one aide to care for thirty residents and night shifts with one aide caring for up to sixty residents. Long hours and short staffing results in burnt out and exhausted nurses and aides, and we cannot give the residents the care they deserve with these conditions. As a professional caregiver this is very hard for me. I love my residents.

We serve with our heart, but we feel like we disappoint our own families. Low wages force Black and Brown families to live in rundown communities, where our children are exposed to drugs, guns, and violence. We are willing to work hard, but the system sets us up for failure. With such low wages and high inflation in this State, I have had to cancel my medical insurance for this year in order to put food on my table. No employee who works 40 hours a week in this industry should not be able to afford health insurance and not be able to pay their bills. We cannot take care of our own families. We are faced with struggling to keep our own children in college. We want to give them a better education than we had, but we cannot afford it. Many children of our Black and Brown families are dropping out of college because parents like me cannot afford to pay for college. Instead we have to work two jobs or put in overtime up to 80 hours a week, which leaves very little time to spend with or care for our own families.

Something is seriously wrong with this picture. We care about the residents that we take care of. We know how hard we work. Please stop telling us that you care about these residents and staff. Show us that you care and help us take care of our own families. Please

allocate funding to Nursing Homes so we can attract and retain the staff that we need to help alleviate our staffing crisis.

Thank you for your time.